

SENATE JUDICIARY  
AMENDMENT NO. 2  
DATE 2/2/09  
BILL NO. HB 130

# Montana League of Woman Voters

The Mental Health Position of the Montana League of Women Voters supports the establishment and maintenance of effective community level mental health services, treating the mentally ill with dignity and providing them a supportive social environment.

We followed and were most impressed by the work of the Interim Committee on Law and Justice and their proposals found in HB 130, 131 and 132 designed to provide less costly and better patient outcomes with humane community care close to family, friends and jobs.

We understand that after strong approval in the House Judiciary Committee, they were sent to the joint appropriations subcommittee where they had a good hearing, and then went to the full appropriations committee, where faced with declining revenues and the need to cut bills requiring new appropriations, the appropriations were amended out and the bills went on to the House and were passed.

HB 654 then provided about \$4 million to the crisis bills, treating them as a demonstration project. We believe that the concept and proposed programs of these bills are so important that they must be saved.

We join with those who are now asking that the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Senate Finance Committee approve HB 130, 131, and 132 and find a way to support these bills with appropriate funding.

The Bozeman League has been impressed by the depth of study of mental health needs in our community, led initially by the Bozeman Deaconess Hospital bringing together community leaders to focus on the problem and possible solutions. Their efforts led to the formation of our Local Advisory Committee appointed by the County Commissioners and representing diverse groups working with mental health in our community.

The County and the Hospital and community members have provided both moral and financial support for development of community based mental health services. We have had support and encouragement from the state. Our crisis facility is ready to break ground as soon as the snow melts.

We are convinced that this community option for mental health services will be less costly for many and will result in better outcomes. We ask for your support.

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